

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAPE T 00139 031224Z

51

ACTION AF-06

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CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

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FM AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4379

INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CAPE TOWN 0139

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SF

SUBJECT: CABINET RESHUFFLE

REF: CAPE TOWN 0127

1. PRIME MINISTER VORSTER HAS ANNOUNCED CABINET RESHUFFLE FOLLOWING NP NOMINATION OF FINANCE MINISTER DIEDERICH'S TO BECOME STATE PRESIDENT (REFTEL). MINISTER OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, SENATOR OWEN HORWOOD, REPLACES DIEDERICH'S IN FINANCE. MINISTER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND OF TOURISM, CHRIS HEUNIS, TAKES HORWOOD'S PORTFOLIO, AND MARAIS STEYN REPLACES HEUNIS. MINDEFENSE P.W. BOTHA TAKES DIEDERICH'S PLACE AS LEADER OF HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

2. COMMENT: FOR A SHORT WHILE IT APPEARED THAT HEUNIS HAD THE INSIDE TRACK TO BECOME THE NEW FINANCE MINISTER. HOWEVER, WE UNDERSTAND THAT LEADING AFRIKANER BUSINESSMEN OPPOSED THIS ON GROUNDS HEUNIS LACKED EXPERIENCE AND BACKGROUND IN ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL MATTERS. HORWOOD, THOUGH GENERALLY CONSIDERED A LIGHTWEIGHT, WAS PROFESSOR ECONOMICS BEFORE HE BECAME VICE-CHANCELLOR OF NATAL UNIVERSITY IN 1965, HAS SERVED ON
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PAGE 02 CAPE T 00139 031224Z

PRIME MINISTER'S ECONOMIC ADVISORY BOARD AND HAD HIS NINE-

MONTH STINT AS MINECONOMIC AFFAIRS.

3. ELEVATION OF STEYN, WHO DEFECTED FROM UNITED PARTY ONLY LAST YEAR, TO MINISTERIAL RANK SURPRISED SOME OBSERVERS HERE WHO THOUGHT THAT STEYN MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN LINE FOR NOTHING HIGHER THAN DEPUTY MINISTER POST. SOME NAT MP'S ARE UNHAPPY THAT THEIR FORMER ENEMY HAS BEEN SO WELL REWARDED, BUT STEYN KNOWN TO BE HIGHLY REGARDED BY VORSTER AND NO ONE IN NATIONAL PARTY LIKELY TO MAKE AN ISSUE OF HIS APPOINTMENT. INEVITABLY, STEYN'S RISE TO CABINET HAS RESURRECTED TALK THAT LAST YEAR VORSTER HAD PROMISED HIM A CABINET JOB IF HE WOULD CORSS FLOOR.

4. MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF CABINET CHANGE IS WHAT DID NOT RPT NOT TAKE PLACE. MEN KNOWN TO BE RELATIVELY MODERATE ON RACIAL ISSUE WERE NOT RAISED IN STATUS, ENDING SPECULATION (OR WISHFUL THINKING) THAT CABINET RESHUFFLE MIGHT HERALD ENLIGHTENED MOVES IN RACE RELATIONS. IN ESSENCE, CABINET LINEUP REMAINS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME, WITH IDEOLOGICAL BALANCE BETWEEN RACIAL MODERATES AND HARDLINERS ABOUT EVEN. VORSTER, IT WOULD APPEAR, WILL CONTINUE TO AVOID CLASH WITH VERKRAMPTE, MOVING SLOWLY AND CIRCUMSPECTLY IN HIS APPROACH TO RACE PROBLEMS.
HURD

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